

Titel: BREV TIL: Eli Fischer-Jørgensen FRA: Charles Ernest Bazell

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Anvendt udgave: Louis Hjelmslev og hans kreds

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Dear Miss Fischer-Jørgensen,

I do not expect to hear from you again until next January, when it is to be hoped that you will renew your excellent resolution. Meanwhile however I apologise for two misunderstandings of mine and correct others of yours. The latter first.

The 'dogma' of converging criteria does not in any way exclude the application of the criteria separately. On the contrary. If criteria must be taken together in determining the general outlines of a category, they must be taken apart for the purpose of classifying the units according to the various types of marginality.

Your difficulty in understanding my remarks on zero arises partly from your unwillingness to believe that I am mad enough to say what I mean when I say that the 'unmarked features' (a contradiction in terms, since the feature is the mark) are just zero, i.e. nothing at all. Partly also perhaps that I have taken over Jakobson's system (with all details of which I really disagree) for the purposes of argument. According to this system, n has only one positive feature, namely nasality. Hence n simply is nasality (in a segmental function). The pair naar/naar represents then a commutation of aspiration with nasality, the phonemes being nothing more than single features. (As for t, which has no positive features, this is so to speak the allophone which represents zero when this appears in a segmental function, whereas non-segmental zero has no positive manifestation.)

Of course there is nothing viciously circular about the principle of commutation as you apply it; nor is there anything glossematic about it either: it is just plain sensible Prague School. As you say, the content-difference between cat/hat is so obvious that one does not investigate whether the expressions are different first: on the contrary one uses it to prove that k and h are not mere facultative variants. But then, in quite the same way, the contents of light as 'un-heavy' and as 'un-dark' are obviously different. Hence the syncretism is merely one of expression, not of content. The glossematists cannot eat their cake and have it. Whether the units are simultaneous or not would not be of any importance for a glossematic analysis, cf. that o is analysed as ng in 'anish'. But this is simply to say that in glossematic analysis the units are not simultaneous. I was not referring to phonetic simultaneity.

Now for my misunderstandings. Jakobson has already pointed out to me that there would be no commutation of d and t in child/hilt (which have the same content). In this case the 'overlapping' happens (by sheer chance) to be between two single phonemes. In awaked and awoken it is between whole series of phonemes (overlap of ai-d and ou-n??). It all seems very trivial.

Certainly in your article you did express most clearly that the criteria of identification were partially substantial, and this did not escape me even at the 1st reading. But even the 3rd reading still left me with the impression that the analysis was formal after a certain stage. However I was wrong.

The offprints without indication of the journal of publication were from the journal of our own department here. I will send you a copy in atonement of my lapse. But it has generally been my experience that linguists prefer not to refer to articles published in so obscure a place. For instance Alon Ellis, in his review of 'Recherches', was amiable enough to give a list of my articles, but avoided mention of those published here. Yet he is quite familiar with them, and has even sent me some very interesting criticisms.

I should indeed be grateful if you ever find occasion to refer to one of our publications. Some of my assistants have published work which does not seem to me in any way inferior to the more respectable stuff published in Europe (let alone the arrant nonsense which passes muster even in reputable periodicals). The average is poor; and this is inevitable so long as every single section of the faculty publishes a separate journal. But I find the journal of our English section useful, since I have made it a principle never to submit an article except at the invitation of an editor. Here I happen to be the editor myself. I ask myself for an article, and the request is seldom refused!

Sincerely

CE Bayly